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Fifteen Years in
the Korea Mission

FIFTEEN YEARS IN THE KOREA MISSION



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I.—OPPORTUNITIES.

The history of the Presbyterian Mission in Korea has been that of passing through one door of opportunity after another.

The fact that the first treaty with the Hermit Nation was secured by the United States (in 1882) opened door Number One. When that treaty was ratified, a few keen eyes—not many on this side the ocean—saw that the hour had struck to enter Korea with the gospel, and one day the cable from New York to Shanghai vibrated with the single word “Corea.” Except for the efforts of two Scotchmen on the northern border, this cable-gram was the first voice from Protestant Christendom to molest the age-old heathenism of Korea. It was destined to wake the echoes

Door of Opportunity
No. 1.

from end to end of the kingdom. The young physician who received that message understood that he was to go, in as unobtrusive manner as possible, to the capital of Korea and try whether

his medical skill could keep him there and could open a path for the preaching missionary to follow. Dr. H. N. Allen reached Seoul, September 1884, and the U. S. Minister, Gen. Foote, made him physician to the Legation. No Korean could object to that. Thus was seized the first opportunity.

In February, 1884, the Board of Foreign Missions had, through a friend, received an offer of \$5,000 from the estate of Frederick Marquand with which to found a mission in Korea. To this sum a lady in Cleveland added \$2,000, and a pastor in New Jersey \$200 more. But not all minds were favorable to the undertaking. It was urged that the condition in Korea was unsettled and

Opportunity likely to remain so for some time. It
No. 2. was a poor country. European powers were skirmishing off Port Hamilton and Vladivostock and who knew but Korea might soon be dismembered between them? Besides, we had missions enough on our hands. Many old stations were even now undermanned. To this view was opposed a far-sighted statesmanship and unshakable resolution, but it was nearly three months before they carried the day and the Board formally accepted those generous gifts. Thus was founded the first Protestant mission to Korea, and the door of Opportunity Number Two swung wide open before the Presbyterian Church.

December 5-8 following, Seoul was distracted with an insurrection. Six Koreans were murdered at an official dinner-party, and a seventh, the most prominent of all, near relative of the King, was terribly mangled and like to die. This was Prince Min Yong Ik who had been Ambassador to our country and went around the world

in the U. S. *S. S. Trenton*. Gen. and Mrs. Foote and all the Europeans fled as soon as possible from the scene of bloodshed to Chemulpo, the port. Not the American doctor. He wrote:

"We couldn't if we would and we wouldn't if we could. I came to do just such work. I can't leave these wounded people.

. . . We shall live in the Legation with the old flag flying, and trust the kind Father to care for us." It required no small degree of nerve, for Mrs. Allen at least, to stay behind where buildings were burning and bullets now and then whizzing in the streets.

Dr. Allen was summoned to attend the Prince and, single-handed, withstood thirteen Korean so-called physicians who wished to pour their black wax into the gaping wounds. They looked on in wonderment while he sewed them up and tied the arteries. A Chinese general also looked on and had the good sense to engage the doctor's services for twenty of his soldiers who had taken part in the riot. These surgical operations were in the main successful, even the prince making a slow recovery. So was opened a third wide door of opportunity. Every mission which has since been

Opportunity
No. 3.



established in Korea, avails of the advantages won at this time.

The kind offices of Lieut. Foulk, who became U. S. *Chargé d'Affaires* at Seoul, forwarded missionary Opportunity Number Four. Could anything have been more humane or conciliatory towards a heathen sovereign who was easily startled than the proposition for a Royal Hospital to be conducted on principles of Western science? For 400 years there had been a sort of dispensary at Seoul under the King's patronage, and, in 1885, a thousand persons were nominally connected with it, and accordingly fed from the government crib. This body of pensioners was, of course, a **Opportunity** foe to the new project, and it was even opposed by certain Europeans **No. 4.** as "a proselyting institution." But, by favor of the King, the hospital was established and made a source of pride to the citizens. The announcement that physicians in charge would receive their salaries "from a benevolent society in America which supports similar institutions in China" was well received among people to whom China was the ancient and august suzerain. The building, simply a Korean house of the better class, accommodating forty beds, was put in repair by Government. The King named the hospital *Hay Min So*, "House of Civilized Virtue," Dr. Allen was placed in charge, and, when Rev. H. G. Underwood arrived, April 1885, he found it in full swing, "four to six operations every morning and about seventy dispensary patients in the afternoon." This was the first institution of Western civilization established in Korea.

Opportunity Number Five grew out of the call for a medically trained woman. Within three

months after Miss Annie Ellers reached Seoul (July 1886,) she had been professionally useful to the Queen, and received from her many proofs of affection. The way was now fully prepared for single women in the mission.

Opportunity
No. 5.

It is not within the scope of these pages to follow in detail a history of fifteen years, but only to outline the more salient events which successively afforded gracious opportunity for the development of the mission. Pursuing this aim, our next step introduces an inquiry: Seoul was at first the center of all things; what opened the door into the provinces? (1) Traveling Koreans, who had been converted through the labors of Rev. John Ross, of the Scotch Mission in Manchuria, had returned across the northern border, and led some of their countrymen to Christ. Among the first men baptized at Seoul were certain of these, and in 1887 there was a sufficient number of partially instructed men in Pyeng An province to warrant the appointment of a Korean helper there. (2) After patient itineration, living quietly for weeks at a time among the people in Pyeng Yang city, though it was not open to foreign residence and Government gave no guarantee of safety, the missionary won his way by human, friendly contact and ceaseless teaching of the truth, and gathered about him a little flock who "could not be laughed out of their religion." When persecution befell and two Korean Christians, though beaten and shut into the death cell, would not deny their faith; and when Rev. Samuel A. Moffett stood by the Christians at the risk of his life; attention was favorably drawn towards a religion that made such followers.

(3) Emphatically, the day of opportunity was ushered in by the Japan-Chinese war. When the people of Pyeng Yang learned that the King's palace was held by Japanese troops, panic seized them. The Christians alone were calm, and they went boldly about the streets urging men to put their trust in God. When the Chinese army surged up to the gates of their own city, September '94, and they were forced to fly, Christians carried their books with them in their boats, or in the loads slung upon their backs, and in all the villages whither they were scattered abroad "they followed the method they had seen pursued and preached the gospel to every man they met." From the spread of the truth, at this time, began the movement which has so greatly multiplied the number of believers in all that region. After the war, the gods of China dwindled in the respect of Koreans everywhere. The weapons which had overthrown their former mighty patron had come from the Western world—the religion of the West could no longer be despised.

Opportunity Number Seven was such as pertains only to a young mission, unhampered by precedent and ruts—
Opportunities No. 7, No. 8. the chance to strike out on new lines and in modern methods. Well has this been availed of.

The Korea Mission holds in its hand to-day the greatest of all its opportunities. Now is the time of outpouring of the Spirit of God and the contagion of Christianity new-born. The first Lord's Supper was celebrated Christmas Day, 1887, in Mr. Underwood's house at Seoul. About that time "seven baptized Christians" were present at

a service. Last year 841 communicants were received to the churches.

The word "church" in the Korea Mission means—not a complete organization with pastor and eldership, but a little congregation of baptized believers corresponding to the *ecclaeia* of the first Christian centuries. Of such "churches," all self-supporting, there are 258 at the opening of 1900.

It is because our brethren in Korea realize their opportunity that they are spending themselves and being spent so fast, yet so joyfully, in wearying journeys, in exhausting examinations of catechumens and candidates for baptism. They know the joy of harvest, and it nerves them to strenuous tasks.

Here we may profitably stop to suggest what different results would have followed a failure to seize, in turn, any one of the opportunities named. Can those early givers cease to be grateful that they gave at the start? Those who put their shoulders under the infant mission and guided and pushed her to her feet may have had their burdens and disappointments, but how rich their reward to-day!

We may notice, also, that some personal instrumentalities which in the beginning were much counted on did not become, after all, the sources of chief blessing to Korea. There was Rijutei. He was exploited in letters from Japan. His picture was printed in America. He posed as another "man from Macedonia." Poor Rijutei fell under bad influences and, while doubtless the means of waking up much interest in Korea, he slammed-to the door, if not of personal salvation, of opportunity to be the first Korean apostle. Diplomacy was in the lead once.

It still has its sphere, but it was not that way the chief blessing came. Medical skill was for a time all-powerful. It will always take its own honorable place, but it was not through miracles of surgery that the wicked forsook his way. It is the simple, unbaited Gospel of Jesus, proclaimed persistently, fearlessly, broadcast; taught and lived, in love and faith and devotion; that has brought showers of blessing to the parched valleys of Korea.

The church must heed the lessons of the past fifteen years and buy up her present opportunity. So far from this favored mission transcending the need of the prayers of God's people, it is the very hour to cry mightily to Him that the harvest may fully ripen, till the little one has become a thousand and all Korea is the Lord's. This is the very time to support and encourage our brethren in every way. It is the last time in the world to be niggardly with the Korea Mission.

II.—RESULTS.

When the Mission to Korea was founded, the law of the country which decreed death to Christians had not been repealed, and the man was living, and by a sudden revolution might be placed on the throne, who only eighteen years before had put 20,000 Roman Catholics to death. On the other hand, one important fact was highly favorable to the introduction of Christianity. The reigning dynasty had withdrawn support to Buddhism. There was no intrenched literary religion.

Hearts were swept bare, and when a warm, living message came to them it would be welcomed.

Progress during the early years was sufficient to encourage—was remarkable compared with first fruits in some missions—but it was slow compared with what followed later. While it was believed that more than two hundred men around Seoul had read Mr. Ross' translation of the Bible or been instructed by his men; while it was known that some of them were secretly praying to the true God, they did not show themselves openly. They were afraid of ridicule and opposition. Those who came to catechumen class were marked men, and every effort was made to tempt them to return to sinful habits which the “Jesus doctrine” men had forsaken. Mr. Underwood baptized the first Korean in July 1886. This man had read Chinese books opposing Christianity, and thereby his curiosity had been awakened to hear the other side. Those who first identified themselves with the Gospel of Christ were warned that they might lose their lives for it, and one man answered: “Though my King cut off my head for obeying my God, I shall be all right.” In June '87, the total baptisms were nine; the next year they included five women. When, in December '91, twenty-three Koreans partook of the Lord's Supper, it was the largest number that had communed together at one time. For those early confessors were not always to be counted upon. Some of them were baptized where the itinerating missionary had found them, at points far distant from the capital. Some of them were never seen after their baptism.

The first Protestant church in the kingdom was organized at Seoul, September, '87. It has now

First
Believers.

expanded into *ninety-nine self-supporting churches*, three of them in the city and the rest in the country surrounding Seoul. In First Church, connection with Seoul Station, the gospel is preached regularly at 105 places. The communicants are 1,200, the adherents 2,800.



OUR FELLOW CHRISTIANS IN SEOUL.

Growth in the North has been even more remarkable. Pyeng Yang was not made a permanent station until 1894. Up to that time, missionary seed-sowing and oversight were accomplished only by means of long, rough journeys, attended with such accommodations of food and

lodging as Korean houses afford : by holding temporary classes and by way-side instruction, or more formal preaching, wherever men would listen. The following outline indicates the rate of advance in this section:

- Sept., 1890. 3 baptized men in Pyeng Yang city, 3 reported believers : no regular meetings, no leadership.
- Mar., 1891. 20-30 Christians found in Eui Ju, a provincial town.
1893. Church organized.
1895. 20 church members in the city; 73 baptized persons in Pyeng An province; 4 church buildings, wholly or partially completed.
1896. 150 added to the church; 22 preaching places.
1897. 377 church members, 1,723 catechumens, 65 preaching places, 14 new church buildings provided by Koreans.
1898. 697 added to the church; total members in this field, 1,050; self-supporting churches, 121; enrolled catechumens, 3,440; new church buildings, 44; Korean contributions, \$1,438 (gold).
1899. Church members, 1,512; self-supporting churches, 153; adherents, 6,433; total church buildings, 94, of which 38 were erected during the year, for which the people contributed 3,781.92 *yen*.

Fusan, a commercial town on the southeast coast, was occupied in 1891 and, four years later, missionary effort had pushed inland, one hundred miles from this point, to Taiku. The latter is a city of above 60,000 people, the capital of the rich Kyeng Sang province. This southern field has been the least adequately manned of all, and is practically undeveloped.

Missionaries were located in Gensan, on the northeast coast, in '92, but in 1899 were with-

Development of
Pyeng Yang Station.

Canadian

drawn, the ~~Australian~~ Mission having come in with sufficient force to provide for that section.

Preaching the Word and building up the Church has been the primary aim in Korea. All else is secondary. This purpose has, however, had a strong backing, from the first, in the medical department. In the year '85-'86 Dr. Allen and Dr. John Heron (who succeeded Dr. The Medical Arm, Allen as physician of the hospital and to the King) had, between them, 11,000 patients. Dr. Lillias Horton (Mrs. Underwood) succeeded Miss Ellers as physician to the Queen in '88. In 1899, 25,000 patients were treated at three centers, Seoul, Fusan and Pyeng Yang. The latter hospital reported three hundred important surgical operations. Fourteen physicians, six of them women, have joined the mission, and the only ones of its membership who have thus far laid down their lives for Korea were on the medical staff: Dr. Heron, Dr. Hugh Brown and Miss Jacobson, nurse.

Schools are, mostly, in the elementary stage and supported by Koreans. There is a small boarding-school for girls at Seoul, and "the nucleus of an academy" for boys at Pyeng Yang. The demand for education is coming.

Literary work has not been neglected. Messrs. Underwood and Gale are on the committee for Bible translation, which is composed of five representatives from four missions. The entire New Testament in Korean is just going through the press in Japan. Language helps have been prepared by several members of the mission and Mr. Gale's great Dictionary was printed in '96. A Hymn-book, various helps to Christian training, some

school text-books, Sunday-school lesson sheets, and a ten-page family newspaper, published weekly, indicate the industry of the mission.

III.—METHOD OF THE MISSION.

The Presbyterian Church has never before come to the place where it was so called to stand still and see the glory of the Lord pass by as on the field of its Korea Mission. In none of its other missions, furnished with equally devoted men and women, has there been a growth at once so rapid and so consistent. What is the secret of it?

It has not been owing to any popular movement. No wave of enthusiasm for Christianity or Western civilization has swept over the land. Obstacles are as definite and apparent in Korea as anywhere else. Oriental vices are as stalwart, the rottenness of human nature is as real. The fear of spirits is prevalent, resort to sorcery is common. Ancestral sacrifices are imbedded in the social foundations, and Oriental social customs hold the people in bondage. Acceptance of Christianity is to a great extent the loss of worldly gain. Add to this, ignorance. Many Koreans hearing with the ear have believed, but they could not read the Bible for themselves. “As we were leaving, one of the women, referring to their ignorance, said, ‘Your leaving us thus is as if a mother should leave her nursing child.’ These Christians beg for some one to teach them.” “A woman sixty-eight years old said: ‘I learned a sentence from Mrs. Han and forgot it; forgot again, asked about

Obstacles to
Christianity.

it day before yesterday and again yesterday, and now I have forgotten it.”

Finally, persecution has been the rule. Of the year just closed the same report is given as in all preceding years: “No field of work has been reported without mention, in one way or another, of persecution; but in the midst of it the Christians have been given grace to receive it, not in a spirit of resentment, but in a spirit of love and rejoicing.”

The method which Dr. Nevius pursued in China, and which has been generally called by his name, is the method of the Korea Mission. First, itineration—then more itineration—constant itineration; hand-picking; believers in a given neighborhood associated into a “group,” with one of their own number appointed “leader”; all statedly studying the Scriptures and worshiping

Christians Trained to Responsibility. together; groups sifted and the catechumen class developed; baptism, after long instruction and probation; the Church kept simple, self-support introduced at the start, as little machinery as possible. There is no Presbytery in Korea, yet. This system has developed a great sense of responsibility for the gospel in Korea Christians. They regard themselves as individually called to communicate the truth they hold. They voluntarily preach from house to house in their villages. Thousands of portions of Scripture and tracts have been voluntarily sold by men traveling about the country on their own business. There is a cheerful, devoted body of unpaid workers, like a man whom Mr. Speer saw, who came in to report upon his visit to “thirty-one congregations.”

Last spring two Pyeng Yang women, returning

"with radiant faces" from a preaching trip, without stopping to take food or rest, hastened to report to Mrs. Moffett. "One said that along the way they often had many insulting things to bear when they were known as Christians, but she smiled and added : 'That does not make any difference when it is for Jesus' sake, and when we can bring home such things as these,'—and she handed me some spirit garments and a little brass implement given up by a sorceress, who had ceased using incantations to demons and now knows the true God."

Workers
Without Pay.

Dr. Georgiana Whiting mentions a dish seller, "a woman filled with the Spirit, who has preached wherever she has gone selling dishes, and not a few have believed through her word."

"Last winter," writes Mr. Moffett, "nearly a score of the men (of one church in Suk Chun County) went two by two into the unevangelized section, north and east, selling books and preaching, and from this new groups have developed in three counties. Six years ago, when passing through An Ju, I talked with an old man and left with him a copy of the Gospel of Mark. For six years he has been reading and re-reading it, and, this year, hearing of a church at Sun Tol, five miles from his village, he came there for further instructions. When I visited the church, he, with six others from his neighborhood, came to be received as catechumens—one of several such instances met this year." (1899).

A missionary writes: "It is the evangelistic spirit fostered in the training classes which, *carried back into all the country churches*, has led to the formation of new groups of believers. The

spread of Christianity is due almost wholly to spontaneous evangelistic efforts of Korean Christians. The church is growing up indigenous, self-supporting, self-propagating, and bids fair to cover the land."

IV.—CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH IN KOREA.

(FROM REPORTS OF 1899.)

Miss Wambold writes: "At Tang Chin the last resident of the village became a believer, so the entire little settlement is Christian. The people all came out to meet me, and I felt exactly as if I were going home. They were so kind and gentle it seemed as if I were not in a heathen country at all."

Mr Gifford mentions Mr. Yi, who, in the midst of trouble, took to drinking, "and soon had his wife presiding over the wine bottle in a saloon. He was dealt with, and at the time of my last visit there was a marked change. He was then ferryman on a poor little boat, where, at low tide, he had to wade across a wide mud flat, carrying passengers on his back; the contrast between the former easy inactivity and the heavy work and wading in ice-water in February, called forth praise to God for the Christian hero who, in Christ's strength, had put away his former sinful occupation."

Mrs. Underwood says: "One candidate for baptism, an ignorant old woman, was asked where Jesus dwelt: 'With me at my house.'

She was then asked if He dwelt only at her house. She answered, ‘Oh, I am an ignorant old woman, I don’t know; but I know that He is at my house.’”

Mr. Baird asked “the humble earnest people of Nong Kang” if they could afford to take time, as



THE SARING, OR RECEPTION ROOM, AT TAIKU.

they are very poor, to meet and study. “They answered feelingly: ‘Oh, teacher, you have come 30,000 *li* to teach us, shall we not take some trouble to learn God’s word?’”

Rev. Graham Lee: “Last Sunday (August 20, 1899) we had communion service in Pyeng Yang Church, and fifty-nine were baptized, thirty-two women, twenty-seven men. Among those re-

ceived was old white-haired Pak, who is an historic character. When the *General Sherman** grounded up here, just below the city, the police magistrate went aboard to investigate. It seems those people in charge of her, who were evidently bent on robbery, held the magistrate on board as prisoner. This Pak, then young and very strong, picked up the police magistrate in his arms, jumped into the river with him and managed to get ashore. For this brave deed he was rewarded with a small rank by the government. The old man is quite a character, and it made him very happy to be baptized."

"A Buddhist temple at Eui Ju has been turned into a church and the deed for the property made over to the believers. The building is a fine one and with little alteration provided a splendid room. The people have recently undergone intense persecution."

Mrs. Gifford writes: "Mrs. Kim has endured constant opposition from all her relatives *for seven years*. A few months ago a change began."

"In one place in Pong San County, work was started by a widow who walked thirty miles to the training class, carrying a bolt of cloth of her own weaving with which to defray her expenses."

"Keeping Sabbath threatened bankruptcy to some (at Seoul) and they re-opened their shops on Sunday. But they repented and are now stronger."

3.S ~~Rev. H. G. Underwood, D.D.~~: "When the meeting was thrown open, a man rose to say that it was indeed for his sins Christ died, but he broke out into weeping before he had finished, and then a wave of sorrow and sobbing swept over the whole congregation as they beheld Christ on the

*In 1866, an armed schooner, owned by an American.

tree for their sins. The next day we celebrated the most impressive passover I ever attended."

Dr. Whiting: "One of these Christians said, 'The whole village has seen a change in me in one thing. I used to beat my children often and severely; now that mind is entirely gone!' . . . One woman gave this testimony: 'When my husband became a Christian, I refused to live with him and left him. Some of the preachers coming down from Seoul told him that he could not be a Christian and retain his second wife and he sent her away. *Then I believed.*' . . . At Hai Ju, a woman sixty-three years old gave one of the clearest testimonies I ever heard. In answer to the question, 'Of what interest is Jesus to you?' she replied '*I was just dead and He made me to live.*'"

THE STORY OF SORAI AND EVANGELIST SAW.

In the eighties the brothers Saw came from Eui Ju, in the North, to make their home at Sorai, in Whang Hai, 170 miles from the capital. They had heard the gospel from Mr. Ross, and they journeyed back to China and afterwards went to Seoul on purpose to ask more about Christ and to procure books. Everything they learned they imparted to their neighbors, and their lives commended the gospel which was on their lips. From time to time the villagers received instruction from a visiting missionary, several were baptized, and when Mr. McKenzie from Nova Scotia came, in 1893, to locate in Sorai, he found Mr. Saw Kyung Jo the accepted leader of Christian work in the district. He engaged Mr. Saw as his language teacher and lived in his house, and when he desired to pay for these and other val-

able services, Mr. Saw declined to receive the money and, upon being pressed, would accept only three dollars and a half a month as an equivalent for food. Mr. Saw said that he believed the gospel and wanted his neighbors to believe it, and, if he should receive money from the foreigner, he would lose his influence ; the people would laugh at him and say, "Any of us can believe and preach, too, if we get money for it." So Mr. Saw refused all salary, supported himself by farming and, spent his leisure time in preaching. A church of twenty-three baptized souls was gathered out of the Sorai congregation, and doubled in the first year. A little chapel was outgrown and succeeded by a church, built entirely with Korean offerings, which was dedicated in June, '96, on the spot where originally the shrine of the heathen deity of the village had stood. This church now supports two Korean home missionaries. The appearance of the place was described in a letter last year :

" Sorai is a little bit of home. The whole village of sixty houses, with two exceptions, is Christian. Imagine going to a village and not having to ask the question, 'Are you a Christian?' It was a great privilege to see them together for worship, from fifty to a hundred on the women's side and as many more on the men's side of the church."

Pronounce	Seoul	Saoul
	Chemulpo	Che-mul-po or pho.
	Pyeng An	"Ping" Än, sometimes Pyöng.
	Pyeng Yang	Ping Yäng.
	Fusan	Foo-sän.
	Gensan	(Hard g) Gen-sän.
	Eui Ju	We Jew.
	Taiku	Tá-koo or gu.
	Sorai	So-ry

DATE DUE

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